

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) In a multi-protocol label switching (MPLS) data network comprised of a plurality of data switches interconnected to form a plurality of data paths to a destination node, a method of routing a first message between a second and a first data switch comprised of the steps of:

establishing a downstream working path for data traffic that includes said first data switch and said second data switch;

establishing a downstream protection path associated with the working path;

establishing an upstream reverse notification path for signal traffic separate from the protection path and associated with said working path;

routing ~~a first~~ the first message from said second data switch to said first data switch via said upstream reverse notification path, the first message providing a fault status indication for said working path.

2. (Previously Presented) The data network of claim 1 wherein said upstream reverse notification path is co-incident with said working path through said network.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein a topology of said upstream reverse notification path can be represented by a directed acyclical graph.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said data switches are asynchronous transfer mode switches that function as label switched routers.